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Most observers of today's academic scene would concede that the faculty is the power center of U.S. higher education. They decide what is taught, how it is taught, and who is taught. They also exert influence on institutional policies concerning size and selectivity, and determine their own permanent membership through recommendations on promotion to tenure. Tenure preserves academic freedom, but it also preserves mediocrity on almost every U.S. campus. Once given, it is nearly impossible to revoke, and has therefore forced many universities to retain teachers whose value to the institution is nil and whose lack of ability impedes the process of education. The power reflected in the present faculty structure and the implications of tenure deserve serious regard by everyone concerned with the modernization of U.S. higher education. It may be asked what constructive purpose tenure serves in a society that provides constitutionally for freedom of expression. The willingness to reconsider and change time-honored methods and facilities, and the decisions made on innovation will shape the future of U.S. education. We cannot afford to accept any element in the structure of higher education as a "sacred cow" at a time when the university is more than ever looked to by society as a primary source of leadership. (WM)

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FACULTY POWER AND THE U. S. CAMPUS

by

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Recently I was asked to address a meeting of educators and administrators on the subject of the potential unionization of faculties in higher education and the working conditions on today's campuses. Having spent most of my career in the business world, the problems of unionization are nothing new to me. I find, in fact, that many of the matters I deal with as a university administrator bear a strong resemblance to those I dealt with in business--housing, real estate, government funds, parking, return on investment, and employee relations. But in addition to the similarities between the academic and the business worlds there are marked differences. "Organization" in the trade-union sense, for example, has to be examined in the context of the present power structure of the university.

In a sense higher education already has a "union"--the American Association of University Professors. Since not all faculty members join the A.A.U.P., the campus is an open shop. But the A.A.U.P., despite the unevenness of its membership across the country, has been responsible for determining many of the working conditions in today's university. This organization will, quite rightly, attempt to gain strength in the future. It is probing now, as are many other segments of the university community, for more influential positions in the structure of our institutions.

Perhaps the fact that the A.A.U.P. exists and has served our faculties well in what Jencks and Riesman call the Academic Revolution is the reason why there has been little penetration by more conventional kinds of unions. The American Federation of Teachers did, as we all know, play a role in the trouble at St. John's University and has, in some

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state systems, managed to enlist the membership of significant numbers of teachers in the junior colleges. But there are as yet few signs that Mr. Cogen's hopes for making his union the spokesman for all higher education are well founded.

Looking ahead, it is very probable, for a variety of reasons, that the A.F.T. or some other union will gain substantial ground in two-year, post-secondary, public institutions in the near future. When that occurs four-year colleges and universities may become more vulnerable targets for unionization and administrators may then be confronted with new forces in the organization of their faculties.

I don't find this a shocking or a frightening prospect. In business life it's a commonplace thing and a highly desirable one. Much of the success of American business, in my opinion, has grown out of its ability to develop viable relationships with labor. Union organization is responsible for eliminating the evils of the sweat shop and for raising the standard of living of the nation as a whole, without undermining management's financial position. So I have no tensions about unions.

Nonetheless, as a businessman, I find myself somewhat baffled by the notion that there may be a widespread push toward unionization by university faculties. What I see on today's campus seems to me to be so much more desirable than anyone would have the nerve to spell out in a routine union agreement that I have difficulty figuring out what more the faculty could ask for.

Jencks and Riesman, discussing the professionalization of university teachers, point out the following:

> "Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century academic histories report many battles in which the basic question was whether the president and trustees or the faculty would determine the shape of the curriculum, the content of particular courses, or the use of particular books.... Today faculty control over these matters is rarely challenged....The faculty, for example,

> have sought the right to choose their colleagues. While they have not usually won this right in the formal sense of actually making appointments themselves, their recommendations are sought at all reputable colleges and universities, and heeded in nine cases out of ten....While administrators or trustees sometimes reject faculty recommendations, they almost never foist their own candidates on an unwilling faculty....The faculty has also sought to apply to the selection of undergraduates the same meritocratic standards that they have long used to select graduate students. Here again they have largely won the day....The faculty has also sought some voice in choosing top administrators and in this too it has been increasingly successful."

As the authors suggest, although these powers have not been formalized and are exerted by faculties in varying degrees at different institutions, they are real powers and most observers of today's academic scene would concede that the faculty is the power center of American higher education. They decide what is taught, how it is taught, and who is taught. Faculty power, incidentally, can even resist the seemingly irresistible force of student power. In an era when students are demanding a louder voice in university affairs and trustees and administrators are working day and night to find mutually satisfactory means of giving them that voice, the faculty can still say "no." One of the inflammatory issues at my institution during the past year was the students' desire to sit, even in a non-voting capacity, on the Curriculum Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. That committee, composed of faculty, refused to seat the students and there was no way anyone could make them do it. That's what I call power.

The faculty also exerts a considerable amount of influence on institutional policies concerning size and selectivity. Although this often involves internecine warfare among competing departmental and divisional interests, in the long run faculty claims strongly affect budgetary allocations and even construction plans. Finally, the

faculty determines its own permanent membership through recommendations on promotion to tenure.

To me, coming out of the business world, tenure is one of the great curiosities of American working life. Essentially, it's a life contract in which the employer agrees to retain the professor for the balance of his career but the professor is not obligated to remain should he get a better offer elsewhere. In my wildest imagination as a publishing executive, and deeply concerned as a publisher must be with freedom of speech and freedom of expression, it would never have occurred to me that one could win that freedom with a life contract. Tenure in the academic world guarantees the right to teach, advise, and write without interference from within or outside the university throughout one's career.

Tenure is generally reserved for the upper academic ranks and academic competence and moral responsibility are, of course, prerequisites to the achievement of tenure positions. When young faculty members come up for promotion, their colleagues are supposed to judge them on the basis of the quality of their teaching, their scholarship, and their character. But once an individual has tenure he cannot be penalized for holding or expressing unpopular views, for poor teaching, for failure to contribute to the intellectual life of the university, or even for an apparent lack of ordinary intelligence or moral responsibility that might be inferred from his expressed views or actions.

Administrators and faculty alike are aware that tenure, once given, is nearly impossible to revoke. They are also aware that on many campuses there are tenured professors whose presence on the faculty is embarrassing and even harmful.

I do not mean to imply a negative attitude toward faculty power or toward academic freedom and its preservation. I am well aware that in order to achieve certain goals an organization must make some concessions. Just as the Civil Service system was designed to take government employment out of politics, so was academic tenure designed to free university scholars from outside interference. From an organizational

point of view, the institution loses a certain amount of control over its personnel when it plugs into its policies a system that guarantees such freedom, for it then limits its own powers of sanctions. But in examining the organization of the university and the conditions under which it can adapt itself to the world it has created and the world it has to serve, it is obvious that the power reflected in present faculty structure and the implications of tenure deserve the most serious regard on the part of everyone concerned with the modernization and adaptability of American higher education.

As things stand now institutions have no choice but to continue the practice because tenure is protected by standards of accreditation. If a university were to announce frivolously that it had decided to eliminate tenure, the very organizations which accredit it as awarding degrees of value would soon refuse to do so. These same accrediting organizations, essentially faculty-manned, also specify other conditions under which institutions of highter learning are operated. You cannot, for example, award a Ph.D. in business administration today unless 90% of the people on your faculty who teach in that field hold the Ph.D.

All this is to suggest that when one considers some of the major conditions of employment in the academic world and when one contemplates the power now in the hands of the faculty, the issues that remain as subjects for negotiations are a far cry from those usually involved in labor-management bargaining.

Robert Nisbet called tenure "an impregnable form of differential privilege." And it's problematic whether any union negotiation could achieve more than that. Tenure today is even more of a differential privilege than it was in the early days of American higher education. In the U.S. tenure was first granted to a group in the society that was unique. College and university teachers were considered the intellectual heart of the community; they were thought to be a prime source of creativity. They were regarded by the society as rather unworldly, in need of protection from the

harsh realities of the world outside the ivory tower. Mr. Chips, I suppose, epitomized the image. They were also a group with very few opportunities for mobility. The typical faculty member lived out his whole career within a single institution. Because of the small number of colleges and universities and the almost imperceptible rate of their growth, there was little competition for teachers. Faculty salaries were low, means of supplementing faculty income (aside from personal wealth) were nonexistent, and the security of an assured position for the duration of one's working life was a logical fringe benefit for institutions to offer--as well as a relatively inexpensive one.

But the faculty is no longer unsophisticated or immobile, nor is there a serious gap at our most prestigeful institutions between faculty salary levels and those of other professionals. There are a great many opportunities, in some disciplines, for faculty members to supplement their incomes through advising, consulting, and writing. Today's good university teachers are in a very strong bargaining position with regard to demand for their services from other educational institutions and from the worlds of business, industry, and government. In fact, the degree of the demand has been responsible since World War II not only for vastly increased salaries and lowered teaching loads but also for the emergence of a star system that makes competition for the very top men a common concern of trustees, administrators, and the faculty themselves. To some of these academic stars, we even offer "instant tenure" in luring them to our universities. The traditional three- to eight-year wait is sometimes reduced to the length of time it takes to get the cap off the fountain pen.

This "differential privilege" of academic tenure had its roots in the Enlightenment when scholars had to be protected from charges of heresy. In the German universities, which served as models for our own, it became protection of the principles of Lehrfreiheit and Lehrnfreiheit--in short, the guarantee of academic freedom to teach and to learn. But one can argue that in a democratic, sophisticated society which provides constitutionally for freedom of expression for all its members, a special guarantee for any single group has lost a good deal of its meaning. It is interesting, incidentally, to comtemplate those intellectuals today who work

outside the academic community, without benefit of tenure. Although I suspect that many faculty members would deny that there are scholars in the non-academic world, I submit that there are people in the arts, humanities, and sciences, working on their own or as employees of business or government, who do not feel restrictions on their freedom of expression and who carry out their work with no interference from the society. It is interesting, too, to note that few institutions either interfere or permit interference with the academic freedom of faculty members who have not yet been granted tenure. The hesitance of the young instructor to take controversial stands is often self-imposed, out of fear of risking the possibility that his senior colleagues will fail to recommend him for promotion.

If we can assume that our society respects and protects the rights of individual freedom of thought and expression and encourages such thought and expression, we cannot hold that freedom in the academic world exists solely as the product of tenure. In other kinds of societies, tenure might not produce such freedom at all. What is important is that the university as a whole has the right to challenge the assumptions of the society, to move without fear into areas of thought that may be unpopular, and to free the minds of its scholars to soar to those heights to which the minds of great scholars have always soared. The simple fact of academic tenure does not necessarily promote this kind of thought. And if it does not, what purpose does it serve?

As we talk about the power structure of the university and the things one might achieve in an organized approach to solidifying that structure, and as we examine the present power and influence of faculties and the ground rules under which employment is made a life contract, it seems to me very difficult to see what constructive purpose could be served if the university moved closer to a unionized relationship with its faculty. If I were a faculty member, I wouldn't trade any union contract I have ever seen for the unwritten contract the faculty now has without feeling that I had lost a great deal of flexibility. One comes to the conclusion quite quickly that it would be hard to beat the present deal.

One comes to some other conclusions as well. It is no secret to our faculties that the tenure system, in addition to preserving academic freedom (and it could be argued that this purpose is amply served by other means) also preserves mediocrity on almost every campus in the United States. It cripples many departments and stultifies many students. I have heard from innumerable faculty members--both tenured and non-tenured, on my own and other campuses--complaints about professors who have long since abdicated any sense of vitality about their disciplines, who have fallen far behind in the knowledge explosion and continue to dole out views and facts no longer relevant to today's problems. Yet these people cannot be forced to change their mental habits because they hold tenure. Until they reach the mandatory retirement age they cannot be replaced because most departmental budgets cannot afford the luxuries of idle faculty or proliferating numbers.

This is certainly not to suggest that incompetence is exclusive to any level of academic rank, or that achievement of tenure is automatically accompanied by intellectual atrophy. But it is common knowledge in higher education that the tenure system has forced many universities to retain some teachers whose value to the institution is nil and whose lack of ability actually impedes the process of education.

The examination of university structure and organization leads to another very sobering conclusion. There is no question but that the university, like the rest of the educational system, is going to have to change. Its ability to do that has been challenged by many people. Harold Howe maintains that it doesn't have the nerve to change; others have said it is incapable of changing itself in a world it created in the first place. There is plenty of evidence that the university is tradition-bound and that some characteristics of campus life serve to resist change. This resistance is troubling to students and other members of the university community as well as to those friends of higher education who want to see it continue to serve the society and provide leadership. It is particularly troubling in light of the fact that there are now techniques and technologies with enormous potential for altering the face of the American university--means of performing with greater efficiency the

process of education.

We are moving into an era of computer-assisted instruction, for example, on a scale that would make it possible for us to improve the ways in which we deal with large numbers of students and could very well change the economics of the university. These new methods might also alter the relationships between students and faculty. Programmed self-instruction and other techniques coming out of the laboratories of experimental psychologists and learning theorists could make possible massive changes in a tradition-bound system.

Not long ago I served on the junior college board of a Midwestern state. That board hopes to build within the next few years some 35 junior colleges throughout the state, so that a post-secondary institution will be within commuting distance of most of the young people who want to attend. It will cost hundreds of millions of dollars. But a great deal can be bought with that money and great savings can be made through technologies now available. It will not be necessary, for example, to build 35 libraries at $35 a square foot and buy 35 copies of every book (at a <u>real</u> cost of $25 per volume) needed in those libraries. It is now in the state of the art to put a junior-college library in a receptacle the size of a foot locker and make that material available to each of the 35 colleges at the flick of a switch.

The decisions we make in higher education with respect to innovational opportunities--from the physical structure in which education takes place to the tools and techniques educators use--and our willingness to reconsider and change, wherever necessary, time-honored methods and facilities will shape the future of American education. The power structure of all levels of education must permit the freedom to effect such changes as will benefit all parts of the system.

This is as true, by the way, in the elementary and secondary schools, and as valid a challenge to unionization at those levels, as it is in higher education. Throughout the system there are teachers who fear that innovative methods will make what they now do obsolete. They cling stubbornly

to practices that no longer serve the purpose of education because they are suspicious of the unfamiliar. But if this group resists change out of fear or stubborn adherence to the way things have always been, they will keep American education from meeting the challenges it faces at all levels, from kindergarten to university.

At the university today there are widely recognized problems that lend themselves to emergency treatment. I don't have to spell out the growing disdain in many areas of higher education for teaching freshman and sophomore courses, the reluctance of our best teachers to teach at the lower levels, or the tendency of many faculty members to evaluate students in their junior and senior years primarily as potential graduate students. These are attitudes that call for change and it may be that we can't change them without restructuring the ground rules by which educational facilities are staffed and administered. We may have to relinquish, like anxious mothers, those clusters of students we have consigned to the ministrations of graduate students and instructors and trust them to teach themselves once in a while. We will certainly have to recognize soon that our secondary schools are sending us kinds of students we never dreamed of having at the university before and that they are ready to do kinds of work we haven't adjusted ourselves to make it possible for them to do until their junior year. We also have to face the fact that to do this we will need new instruments, new techniques, and a thorough overhaul of the machinery, as well as willingness on the part of the faculty to implement change. What most of us who are concerned about higher education deplore is that our faculties today seem to be ignoring the urgency of the need for change. Many verbalize in place of acting. Too many others resist innovation or simply close their eyes to the possibility of it. Of course, the best scholars do involve themselves in this kind of effort. But the best scholars very often are the ones who are lured away from our good campuses to a handful of "prestige" institutions. Those who are left behind are not always avid supporters of innovation. Again, this holds true for other levels of the educational system. Many an old school superintendent has told me that the average classroom teacher sets her pattern of teaching in the third year of her career and only dynamite will change it after that. You pay your price for security and tenure at

all levels of education, apparently.

Some may see these words as an attack on tenure or on the potential unionization of university faculties. I would vigorously deny that. The position I take is that we cannot afford to accept any element in the structure of higher education as a "sacred cow" at a time when the university is more than ever looked to by the society as a primary source of leadership. If change is called for, we must have the flexibility to change. If our internal organization is such that it resists change, then we must do something about it. Whatever we can do, without sacrificing our rights of academic freedom, should be of concern to us all. We cannot even begin to consider these possibilities without weighing, frankly and objectively, the good and evil we have built into the present power structure of the university.